

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
25 September 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist
Views on the War in South Vietnam

1. The recent spurt in Viet Cong military action in the Mekong Delta and Ca Mau regions of South Vietnam was apparently timed to take advantage of the advent of the dry season and the pre-occupation of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces with the Buddhist affair. It may also signal the beginning of a Communist attempt to regain some of the military initiative lost by the insurgent forces since the beginning of 1962. As such, it may represent a partial implementation of decisions on the war made during a top-level North Vietnamese review of the situation which apparently took place in early 1963.

2. Concerned over the slowdown in Viet Cong progress, Hanoi apparently decided to step up its efforts to bolster Viet Cong strength in an attempt to counter the growing effectiveness of ARVN military forces, and to help the Communists regain the military initiative which they enjoyed in certain key areas such as the Mekong Delta during 1960-61. Such action would be consistent with the Communist strategy, evident since 1960, of organizing the Viet Cong both in weapons and manpower to enable it to fight on as even terms as possible with the better equipped and numerically superior ARVN forces.

3. There have been a number of indications since April that Hanoi was taking steps to stiffen the Viet Cong. Numerous reports were received at that time indicating that sizable movements of men and materiel were taking place from North Vietnam to southern Laos. A stepped-up Communist effort to insure security in the infiltration corridor began about the same time. With the arrival of the

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rainy season, the influx appears to have ceased; reports persisted, however, of sizable North Vietnamese concentrations near Tchepone and other key points in south-central Laos. Some of these forces may now have moved into South Vietnam.

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4. Concurrent with Hanoi's efforts to strengthen the Viet Cong, there has been evidence of closer military cooperation with Communist China.

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During the past few months, the North Vietnamese have expressed growing indignation in their propaganda over alleged overflights by hostile aircraft bent on reconnaissance and "spy dropping" missions; they have also shown increased concern over the possibility of a direct US attack on their territory.

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5. Hanoi's recent actions indicate that it is prepared to wage a long and arduous struggle in South Vietnam. By subjecting South Vietnam's military forces to a grinding process of attrition and by undertaking a vigorous and flexible psychological and political campaign, Hanoi is convinced that the will to resist in the South can be broken. Within this context, Communist strategy calls for temporary rises in the scale of attacks such as we have often seen in the past. More significantly, it also calls for the steady infiltration of replacements and supplies into the South to offset losses and to maintain the will and determination of the Viet Cong organization. If the GVN is unsuccessful in limiting infiltration and local recruitment, over the long run Viet Cong strength could

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be appreciably increased and the nature of the war in South Vietnam could undergo a gradual but substantial change.

6. Thus far we see no evidence that this "controlled risk," long-run approach to the struggle is being abandoned. Despite their propaganda commitment to militancy, the Chinese have shown considerable caution where the risks of US involvement are high. Mao Tse-tung's statement on 29 August affirming that the US would "finally" be driven out by the "people of South Vietnam" did not suggest that a marked increase in Chinese support or involvement was in process.

7. In any case, it is doubtful that Hanoi would be responsive to Chinese views unless these coincided with its own. Despite the increasing support which Hanoi is giving Peiping in the Sino-Soviet dispute, there is no evidence that Hanoi does not retain independence of action. Unless Hanoi believed that the political and military situation in South Vietnam had so deteriorated and the US had disengaged in South Vietnam to such an extent that a decisive military victory were possible, it is likely to continue to proceed with due caution in support of the Viet Cong. The evidence, as we see it, suggests that Hanoi does not believe that the current crisis in South Vietnam fulfills these conditions.

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